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SUBJECT: GAZA HUMANITARIAN UPDATE, JANUARY 12, 1700 HRS  
LOCAL

REF: TEL AVIV 0060

1. (SBU) As of 17:00 local on January 12, 97 truckloads of humanitarian goods had transited Kerem Shalom crossing (63 truckloads of food, 1 of medical equipment, and 33 of other goods). An additional 27 truckloads of grain passed through the Karni crossing, which was open this afternoon; Karni is expected to continue to operate regularly, now that the IDF is in control of the nearby Gaza City suburbs. The Nahal Oz fuel terminal was closed today due to security issues near the crossing, but fuel could not have been transferred in any case, because 300,000 liters of diesel and 200 tons of cooking gas are waiting to be picked up on the Gazan side of the crossing. If the fuel is picked up tomorrow, more should be able to be transferred. However, the IDF and EU coordinated the movement of five truckloads of industrial diesel from the crossing to the Gaza power plant. Starting tomorrow, the GOI hopes to be able to allow 25 truckloads daily through Erez. If all goes as planned, the GOI expects 190 truckloads of goods to transit into Gaza (105 through Kerem Shalom, 60 through Karni, and 25 through Erez).

2. (SBU) The Ambassador met with Joint Coordination Room (JRC) chief Baruch Spiegel, accompanied by DCM, USAID Director and EmbOffs. The Ambassador said Israel understands how important it is to make this humanitarian effort work, and asked that the GOI let us know what we can do to help. The USAID Director made a strong pitch to raise Gaza crossings capacity to 200 truckloads per day. Spiegel said he was willing to support that effort and suggested consulting with local experts on how best to proceed. Spiegel noted that the GOI is looking at increasing Erez capacity for trucks beyond the current 25 truckloads per day. USAID Director reminded Spiegel that a plan for this expansion was completed two years ago, and would cost an estimated USD 2 million. Spiegel said the Ministry of Defense would find the money; the problem would be finding adequate staffing for the project, which could take one to two months.

3. (SBU) The IDF humanitarian pause took place between 10:00 and 13:00 today, although fourteen rockets continued to be fired from the Strip into Israel during the pause, according to COGAT staff. Over the course of the day, a total of twenty rockets were fired on Israel from the Gaza Strip. One was a direct hit on a house in Ashkelon; all the residents were in the basement.

4. (SBU) Electricity and infrastructure. 64 percent of Gaza is being supplied with electricity. A few power lines from Israel and one from Egypt are still in need of repair. Water is beginning to flow again, although two large pipes from the main water treatment plant remain in need of repair, but should be repaired shortly. Seven tankers of fuel were picked up by the water company and hospital yesterday to run these facilities. Telephone fiber optics cables have been

repaired and are lines are operating.

15. (SBU) Sewage. Repairs to Bayt Lahiya are still pending. 3000 liters of diesel are required to run the pump to move sewage from the main reservoir to smaller reservoirs to prevent overflow. The Palestinian repair teams insist on an ICRC escort for the fuel (the IDF offered to accompany the necessary fuel shipment, but the offer was refused). The ICRC was not able to meet its commitment to escort the fuel trucks today, because other priorities had precedence. The IDF damaged infrastructure to a sewage facility at Sheikh Adjlin and is exploring options to repair this facility itself (this is an area of heavy IDF activity), unless the Palestinians do not agree to allow the IDF to go in to conduct a needs assessment in which case the IDF will coordinate with an international organization to escort a Palestinian team to the site to assess and make repairs. MFA has asked the Embassy to weigh in with the ICRC on the sewage repair issues; we are following up on this request.

16. (SBU) Cash. UNRWA, WFP and ICRC requests for cash transfers have been approved by the GOI, but the on-the-ground logistics for these transfers are still being discussed and coordinated. (NOTE: Apparently there was a misunderstanding regarding whether the PMA or UNRWA would handle cash transport for the \$20 million request, each party believing the other was responsible. END NOTE). Further, Palestinian banks are refusing to process cash shipments because their insurance policies are void during a time of war; they are seeking backing from the PA. Consequently, no cash went into the Gaza Strip today via the crossings from Israel. All banks in Gaza remain closed due to ongoing

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military operations in population and commercial centers in Gaza; no date has been set for bank reopenings.

17. (SBU) Field hospital under consideration. Gen, Spiegel told the Ambassador that the IDF is considering setting up a field hospital to treat Palestinians, or to devise a mechanism to treat wounded Palestinians in Israeli hospitals. However, the MFA noted to EconOff, humanitarian organizations on the ground in Gaza have told the GOI that these facilities are unnecessary.

18. (SBU) Evacuations. Erez was officially open for urgent humanitarian cases today to travel to East Jerusalem or West Bank hospitals, but no one was evacuated because no lists of injured were provided. The evacuation of a corpse of a Ukrainian citizen was approved, but could not occur because the body could not be removed from the rubble without additional heavy equipment. Wednesday's planned evacuation of about 800 foreigners (including about 100 AmCits) and through Erez, coordinated by the USG, is being postponed due to the January 13-14 visit to Gaza and Israel of ICRC President Kellenberger. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon is expected Thursday, January 15.

19. (SBU) Coordination with UNRWA. The IDF's most recent list of UN facilities in Gaza listed only some twenty properties, while the UN claimed a far greater number. In response to the GOI request, UNRWA provided a list of 91 UN buildings and shelters, which the MFA has forwarded to the IDF.

110. (SBU) Another "Free Gaza" movement boat, the Spirit of Humanity, set sail from Cypress en route to Gaza today, with six doctors, seventeen journalists and three European parliamentarians on board.

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